

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Banks mayoral recall lacking valid reasons

The effort to recall Banks Mayor Robert Orlowski appears to be based on either remarkable misperceptions or stunning ignorance of the mayor's responsibilities and duties.

Why else would anyone charge the mayor with responsibility for the failure of Banks voters to renew an operating levy for the police department? This has been brought before the voters twice; it was overwhelmingly approved twice, and it failed twice...because not enough voters cast ballots to meet the double majority requirement.

The city charter does not require the mayor to hustle votes, nevertheless, Orlowski spent a lot of time knocking on more than 200 doors and explaining the levy to Banks residents. If the people behind the recall had put in the same effort, the levy might have won...but that's a lot harder than blaming the mayor and getting 68 signatures for a recall election.

Another truly ludicrous charge is that citizens "are not encouraged to attend" council meetings and are not allowed to speak if they do attend. Council meetings are held on a regular schedule and are open to the public, but it's really hard to "encourage" attendance by people who aren't interested.

If those who want to recall the mayor actually attended council meetings, they would see that a time for public comment is on the agenda. Citizens are not only allowed to speak, they sometimes do so voluminously. To claim otherwise is simply untrue.

Equally untrue are allegations that Orlowski is responsible for citizens' lack of knowledge about "water issues" and "major decisions." Even citizens who don't attend council meetings can learn a great deal about what is happening by reading just one of the four different newspapers that report on city government in Banks.

Information is available for anyone who wants to learn. Conversely, it makes no difference how much information is available when there is no desire to learn.

Mayor Orlowski's unpaid work on behalf of the citizens of Banks is regulated by the City Council, which must approve all decisions before action can be taken. These decisions are made in public and his work is done in public. The mayor should not be recalled.



Federal Poverty Guidelines: Who is poor in 2004?

The Federal Poverty Guidelines for 2004 have been released. The poverty guidelines, sometimes loosely referred to as the "federal poverty level," define who is officially considered "poor." The guidelines are adjusted each year to account for inflation.

State and federal agencies use the guidelines to determine eligibility for a range of programs, such as National School Lunch Program, Legal Services, Food Stamps, and the Oregon Health Plan.

The guidelines are not used for the state's cash assistance welfare program, called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), or for determining eligibility for the federal or state earned income credits.

The Federal Poverty Guidelines are based on the size of the family and are applicable to the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia; there are different guidelines for Alaska and Hawaii. "The poor" are families with incomes at or below the poverty guidelines. While the term is not officially defined, "low income" often means families with incomes at or below 200 percent (twice) the poverty guidelines.

| Family Size | Yearly Income | Monthly Income | Hourly Income |
|-------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1 | \$9,310 | \$776 | \$4.48 |
| 2 | \$12,490 | \$1,041 | \$6.00 |
| 3 | \$15,670 | \$1,306 | \$7.53 |
| 4 | \$18,850 | \$1,571 | \$9.06 |
| 5 | \$22,030 | \$1,836 | \$10.59 |
| 6 | \$25,210 | \$2,101 | \$12.12 |
| 7 | \$28,390 | \$2,366 | \$13.65 |
| 8 | \$31,570 | \$2,631 | \$15.18 |

For each additional person add \$3,180 (yearly), \$265 (monthly), \$1.53 (hourly).

Source: Federal Register, Vol. 69, No. 30, February 13, 2004, pp. 7335-7338. Monthly and hourly figures calculated by the OCPP and rounded to the nearest dollar and cent, respectively. The hourly rate is based on 40 hours of work per week for a full year (2080 hours).

The 2004 Federal Poverty Guidelines have been adjusted for inflation over the last year. Following are last year's 2003 guidelines for comparison:

| Family Size | Yearly Income | Monthly Income | Hourly Income |
|-------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1 | \$8,980 | \$748 | \$4.32 |
| 2 | \$12,120 | \$1,010 | \$5.83 |
| 3 | \$15,260 | \$1,272 | \$7.34 |
| 4 | \$18,400 | \$1,533 | \$8.85 |
| 5 | \$21,540 | \$1,795 | \$10.36 |
| 6 | \$24,680 | \$2,057 | \$11.87 |
| 7 | \$27,820 | \$2,318 | \$13.38 |
| 8 | \$30,960 | \$2,580 | \$14.88 |

For each additional person add \$3,140 (yearly), \$262 (monthly), \$1.51 (hourly).

Source: Federal Register, Vol. 68, No. 26, February 7, 2003, pp. 6456-6458. Monthly and hourly figures calculated by the OCPP and rounded to the nearest dollar and cent, respectively. The hourly rate is based on 40 hours of work per week for a full year (2080 hours).

For additional information contact the Oregon Center for Public Policy. These charts are available on the OCPP web site at: <http://www.ocpp.org/poverty/index.htm>. For previous years' poverty guidelines, or guidelines for Alaska and Hawaii, visit the web site for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/index.shtml>